

III.—On one of the four original pictures from life of the Réunion or White Dodo. By LORD ROTHSCHILD, F.R.S., M.B.O.U.

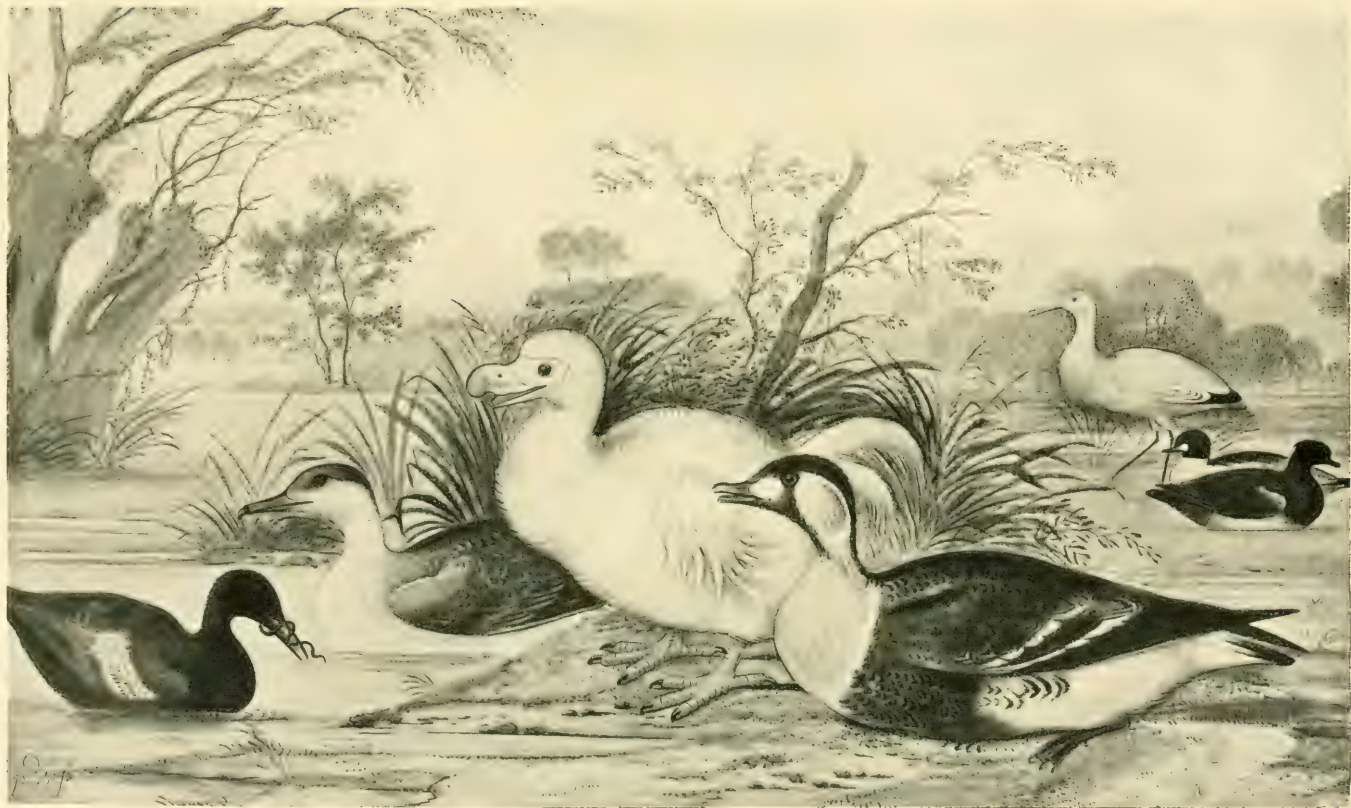
(Plate II.)

THE first mention of the White or Réunion Dodo (*Didus borbonicus*) was made by Tatton, the chief officer of Captain Castleton (Voy. Castleton, Purchas his Pilgrimes (ed. 1625) i. p. 331, Bourbon or Réunion) and his account is as follows:—

“There is a store of land fowle both small and great, plenty of Doves, great Parrats, and such like; and a great fowle of the bignesse of a Turkie, very fat and so short-winged, that they cannot fly, being white and in a manner tame: and so be all other fowles, as having not been troubled nor feared with shot. Our men did beat them down with sticks and stones. Ten men can take fowle enough to serve fortie men a day.”

After this the White Dodo was mentioned by Bontekoe in five different treatises from 1646 to 1650, and by Carré in 1699, and a more detailed description is given by Sieur D. B. (Dubois) in 1674. In this description, however, the extremities of the tail and wings are given as black, whereas in the picture of Pieter Witthoos they appear as yellow. The truth is that the males and females were very different. The full history of the two Dodos has lately been fully worked out by Professor Oudemans, and I give here his description of the two sexes of the White Dodo:—

*Male.* The horny sheath of the upper mandible was hooked and sharp; its distal end black, its proximal half was yellow with transverse black stripes; the rest of the bill was white. The head and neck were reddish brown abruptly passing into a cream-coloured breast and gradually becoming yellowish further back; a few downy feathers were scattered over the head, and a ball-shaped tail of Ostrich-like feathers gradually passed into the subcaudal coverts and circumanal feathers.



REPRODUCTION OF THE PICTURE OF THE WHITE DODO  
BY PIETER WITTHOOS.

*Female.* The horny sheath of the upper mandible was not hooked, but obtuse, sometimes ending in a blunt point, sometimes rounded; it was greyish or light fawn-coloured, the rest of the bill being greyish or greenish; the whole body cloth-white, the wings golden yellow. The tail consisted of at least six white rectrices which resemble in shape those of a Silver Pheasant.

The picture here reproduced (Pl. II.) and a second by the same artist, now in Holland, were drawn from a living bird brought to Amsterdam about 1670. The first mention of this picture was made by the late Professor Alfred Newton in the *Transactions of the Zoological Society*, vol. vi. 1867, pp. 373-376, pl. 62, where a portion of the picture is reproduced. The painter, Pieter Witthoos, was a well-known Dutch artist of birds and landscapes. The other birds in the picture are a Red-breasted Goose, a female Red-breasted Merganser, a Black Guillemot, a Tufted Duck, a Golden-eye, a female Widgeon, and a Spoonbill. There is a companion picture by the same artist depicting a Sheldrake, a Shoveler, a female Tufted Duck, a Smew, a young Great Northern Diver, a Widgeon, and two ill-defined Ducks.

These pictures were formerly in the possession of Mr. C. Dare of Clattenford, Isle of Wight, and for many years were erroneously supposed to have been deposited in Carisbrooke Castle; they were purchased by me from Mr. Dare's son in the summer of 1918.

The two other pictures are by Pieter Holsteyn and were drawn from the same bird, and are in Holland. All four paintings were made between 1670 and 1693.

The White Dodo became extinct between the years 1735 and 1801, for between 1735 and 1746 a living one reached France, sent by M. de la Bourdonnaye, the Governor of the Mascarene Islands at that time; while when Monsieur Bory de St. Vincent made his scientific survey of the islands in 1801 the bird no longer existed.